HELPFUL HINTS and TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Apartment Advice

Determine what type of apartment you will want.

Do you want roommates or would you rather rent an apartment by yourself? Off-Campus Housing can help you find a roommate through our “roommate” tab on our website or the apartment can also help.

Where do you want to live? Close to campus? A bit further away with an apartment shuttle provided?

Take a tour of the apartment to see everything in person, so there aren’t any questions.

See our “Apartment Vocabulary” section for help with terms and abbreviations you are likely to encounter.

The 5 W’S when you tour an apartment

You need to make sure that this is the right fit for your lifestyle.

Who: Who are your neighbors? Are they first or second-year students, studiers, partiers? You want to make sure the community fits your personality and needs. Make sure you’re comfortable with who your neighbors are.

What: What does the rent include? What doesn’t it include?

Where: Where is the apartment located? Where is the grocery store? How long does it take to get to campus?

When: When can you move in and out? When is rent due and when is it late?

Why: Why should I move in here? You can determine by his or her response, if the community is honestly a good place to live.

What you should know before signing a lease

Before you sign anything READ AND UNDERSTAND YOUR LEASE! If you have questions, ask. When/if possible, tour the place you are considering BEFORE you sign the lease.

Your lease will define exactly what you can and cannot do while living there. Once you sign it, you have legally agreed to ALL of its terms. Violating the terms of the contract may have legal ramifications. It is critical that you know what you can and cannot do while living in your apartment.
If you do not leave your apartment in the same condition as when you moved in, you will be required to pay for damages, excessive cleaning charges, etc. Some examples include: holes in the wall, stains on the floor/carpet, walls painted without permission of the apartment’s staff, trash left behind or food left in the refrigerator, just to name a few.

Make sure you read and understand “5 Things To Consider Before Breaking Your Lease”.

Apartment leases are rarely negotiable. If you are uncomfortable with a particular apartment's lease terms, then we suggest you check out another apartment.

To avoid any and all hassles READ THE CONTRACT! You will know exactly what is expected of you and what you are able to do. Carefully check the apartment for damages and inspect all appliances. See the information directly below.

When you are ready to move-in, you will be given a checklist or room condition report. Use this form to identify any existing damage, whether appliances are working or not, or any abnormal circumstances. If you do not complete this form when you move-in, the apartment may assume the damage was caused by you, when it was caused by someone else, and charge you large sums of money.

Make sure you get a copy of the lease after it has been signed by you and the apartment staff.

5 Things To Consider Before Breaking Your Lease

1. **The reason.** If your reason for wanting to move out has anything to do with not liking your neighbors or your apartment, you will most likely be stuck paying high fees.

2. **Proof.** If you have a legitimate reason for needing to break your lease, come prepared to show your cause on paper. You have to be able to provide proof of your situation.

3. **Alternatives.** Consider all your options. Is there really no way for you to be happy in your apartment, and do you really have to leave before your lease expires?

4. **Subletting.** Is subletting your apartment an option? Are there additional costs required to do that? Put up flyers and recruit friends to help.

**What Documents Do You Need To Bring?**

As an international student looking for an apartment, most all of the apartments will want specific documents. We recommend you start gathering these documents as much as three months before you start your search.
Here is a list of documents you should have in order to sign a lease:

- Copy of Passport
- I-20 or DS-2019
- Social Security Number (SSN) – if you have one
- Proof of good credit history – this generally takes the form of a credit check. If you are unable to provide an acceptable credit history, be prepared to have a Guarantor co-sign your lease and utility contracts.

**Apartment Vocabulary**

**Apartment Amenity**

This refers to items of convenience or enjoyment that are provided by the apartment, usually at no cost. Examples are: swimming pool, club house, fitness center, etc.

**Deposit**

This is an amount of money that is required to be paid when signing the lease on your new apartment. The deposit is to protect the apartment owner from the possibility of future damages or default on the lease. The deposit should not exceed 1.5x the monthly rent. You need to provide a valid U.S. address so your deposit can be returned to you via a family member or friend, as long as you leave your apartment in the same or better condition as when you moved in.

**Furnished Apartment**

These are apartments that contain some items of furniture rather than requiring you to supply all furniture. Things that are not included in a furnished apartment are: dishes, cups, silverware, pots, pans, linens, towels, pillows, blankets, vacuum, iron, ironing board. You will need to supply these items.

**Guarantor (also called a co-signer)**

A person that agrees (in writing) to pay your lease and associated expenses if you default (are unable to pay) on your lease. A guarantor may be required when applying for a lease if you are unable to demonstrate a history of good credit or an income capable of paying the rent.

**Lease**

Your lease is a legally binding contract between you and the apartment. This contract will spell out the legal requirements and limitations for both you the renter, and the apartment owner. If you are unable to understand the language in the lease, we recommend hiring a lawyer trained in this area to assist you, or setting a meeting with ASUA Legal Services, which is a free service to UA students and is on campus. You need to know when your rent is due, to avoid any late
payments. You cannot have someone move into your room and assume your lease – they need to sign a lease for that space in their name.

Social Security Number (SSN)

This is a nine-digit number issued by the U.S. Social Security Administration. SSNs are issued to U.S. citizens, permanent residents and temporary working residents. The primary purpose of a SSN is to track individuals for tax purposes, and SSNs are only available to international students with employment.

Utilities

Some apartments will include certain utilities in the rent, e.g. gas and water, while others require you to set-up service with the utility company yourself, e.g. Tucson Electric Power (TEP) for your electricity. Check with the apartment when you sign the lease to determine if you have to start service ahead of time, in order to get your keys.

Abbreviations

- A/C – Air Conditioning (often used to include heat as well)
- Apt. – Apartment
- BR – Bedroom. You will usually see this preceded by the number of bedrooms, e.g. 3BR which is an apartment with 3 bedrooms.
- BA – Bathroom. You will usually see this preceded by the number of bedrooms, e.g. 2BA which is an apartment with 2 bathrooms.
- W/D – Clothes washer and dryer (sometimes in the apartment, not in a separate laundry room)
- S/B – Apartment Shuttle or Public Bus. Options for getting to campus from your apartment.
- F/U – Furnished/Unfurnished. Some apartments provide all furniture; others require you to provide your own.
- W/G/E – Water, Gas, Electric. Some of these utilities may be paid as part of your rent. Some you may have to pay yourself (ask the apartment to be clear).
  - TEP – Tucson Electric Power (company that provides electric service)
  - SW Gas – Southwest Gas (company that provides gas service – if the apartment doesn’t include this in your rent).
- SSN – Social Security Number

Additional things to know:

Apartment’s Right-of-Entry

The apartment staff is legally able to enter your apartment at reasonable times to inspect and perform repairs. The apartment will typically notify you ahead of time if they will be entering your apartment, but in many cases, they don’t have to.
Electricity

U.S. electrical current is 110 volt/60 hertz. Most foreign appliances use a 220 volt/50 hertz current. Appliances requiring a 220 volt/50 hertz current will not work properly in the U.S. without an appropriate adapter. If your apartment does not pay for electricity, you will need to notify Tucson Electric Power to start service. Some apartments require service in your name before you can get your keys. Make sure you ask the apartment what their policy is when you sign the lease.

Drinking Age

The legal drinking age in Arizona is 21. Unfortunately, it doesn’t matter what the drinking age is in your country! Be prepared to show a valid picture ID proving you are 21 or older when ordering (or possessing) alcoholic beverages at local drinking establishments. The same is true when drinking at a party in someone’s apartment.

Your Lease

You cannot just leave your apartment and lease when you no longer need housing. You need to notify the apartment as soon as possible, to let them know when you will be leaving, so there is no misunderstanding. **It is your responsibility to find someone to take over your lease.** They need to sign a new lease before you are no longer responsible. If you fail to comply with this requirement, the apartment may take legal action against you, and leaving without notification may result in huge monetary penalties. If you no longer need the space you signed a lease for before you move in, **please be respectful and notify the property as soon as possible.**

School Status

You are required to be a UA or Pima College student, and the apartment complex will confirm your status.